

National Elk Refuge News – July 24, 2006

Landmark Volunteers



Summer 2006 crew



Volunteer Anna Carroll beams with pride after chopping a noxious musk thistle.



Students stained and oiled a cabin used in the winter for horse-drawn sleigh rides onto the National Elk Refuge.

A group of Landmark Volunteers spent two weeks this month on the National Elk Refuge, helping with a variety of outdoor chores during their summer program assignment. The Landmark Volunteers program offers 56 summer service opportunities across the country to high school students, primarily with non-profit organizations.

The thirteen students lived on site in Quonset tents with wooden floors and prepared their meals in a nearby cook shack. For many, this experience alone was unique. “The nights were cold, but the tent was cozy. We passed the time by telling stories and playing cards,” said Lee Golodny from New York. “It made us a very cohesive group.”

Most of the participants were from the eastern United States and had not traveled to this part of the country. “We wanted to have a nice experience, see some wildlife, and explore the West while at the same time have some fun,” explained Cynthia Desir from Boston.

During their first week on site, the group chopped noxious musk thistle weeds, oiled historic log buildings and residences, and moved rocks to the base of boundary signs in order to deter bison from rubbing on the posts. Their second work week included painting boundary sign posts, moving irrigation pipes, and cleaning out the contents of a historic barn which the National Elk Refuge hopes to restore and use for interpretive and community events.

The students learned about the Landmark Volunteers program through friends and family. Applicants to the program are screened and must submit both a written essay and a teacher recommendation. “Not everyone gets to participate in the program. The organization wants to make sure they’ll work hard and get along with others,” said Sarah Brewer, who has served as the National Elk Refuge’s team leader for the past two years. Though the participants do not receive a salary or stipend for their

Students moved hand line irrigation pipes from one field to another. Cultivated grasslands on the National Elk Refuge are planted to augment native forage available for elk in the winter.



work, they earn 80 hours of community service credit and receive a letter of recommendation from the Landmark Volunteers program, both of which are beneficial for future educational opportunities and employment.

The National Elk Refuge has hosted a Landmark Volunteers crew for the past nine summers and is scheduled to be a location site again next year.



Home Sweet Home included a cook shack (left), a shower/bathroom facility (rear middle), and two Quonset tents (right).



Landmark volunteers spent their last day on site working at the historic Miller Barn. The barn was built in 1898 and placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2001.